



## MEMORANDUM

Date: September 12, 2014

To: Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent

From: Leah Tivoli, Sustainable Operations Manager

Subject: Lower Kinnear OLA Evaluation

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### Overview

The Lower Kinnear Off-Leash Area (OLA) pilot has been successful and should become a permanent OLA. The OLA meets nearly all the criteria for achieving permanent status. The areas that continue to need some attention are parking, water access, way-finding and promotion. The following memorandum provides some background, the evaluation process, issues/observations and a more detailed recommendation.

### Background

The off-leash area (OLA) program established in 1996 has been very successful. We now have 11 permanent OLAs and one temporary OLA that are operating well under the Citizens for Off-leash Areas (COLA)-Seattle Parks and Recreation (Parks) Agreement.

In 2006, Ken Bounds directed the department to find suitable sites for an OLA in Queen Anne/Magnolia to ensure the provision of OLAs in all sectors of the city. Parks formed a committee with representatives of the Magnolia Community Club, Queen Anne Community Council and Citizens for Off Leash Areas (COLA) to identify five sites in Magnolia/Queen Anne. The five sites identified were: Magnolia Park, Magnolia Manor, Thorndyke Park, David Rodgers Parks and Kinnear Park.

There were two Public Meetings, one in Magnolia and the other in Queen Anne. Parks mailed more than 11,000 notices to neighborhoods surrounding the five possible sites. The Magnolia meeting drew 120 community members and the Queen Anne meeting drew 80-100.

Parks staff evaluated each site based on criteria legislated in Council Resolution #29628:

- A. Avoid interference with other established uses or department-sponsored activities.
- B. Avoid directly abutting residences.
- C. Assure the availability of close parking.
- D. Avoid locating near children's play areas.
- E. Locate where there are minimal impacts upon the total visual character of a park.
- F. Locate where there is low potential for spillover into areas not designated or off-leash use.

G. Avoid sensitive environmental areas such as wildlife habitats and steep slopes.

Based on the evaluation and public comments, Parks staff recommended David Rodgers, Lower Kinnear and Magnolia Manor to be constructed. These sites were approved by the Superintendent, received a SEPA determination of non-significance, and were brought before the Board of Park Commissioners where they recommended for final approval. The Superintendent approved Lower Kinnear and Magnolia Manor.

For further details regarding the siting process refer to links below:

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/OLA.htm> ;

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2006/10-12-06.pdf>

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2006/10-26-06.pdf>

Magnolia Manor and Lower Kinnear parks were built in November 2012 and January 2013, respectively.

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/off-leash/>

For further details about the Lower Kinnear construction process see:

[http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/lower\\_kinnear/enhancement.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/lower_kinnear/enhancement.htm)

For more information relating to the OLA program visit: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/offleash.asp>

### Evaluation Process

Lower Kinnear OLA opened in January 2013. Per Ordinance 118724 (Council Bill 111869), all OLAs start as pilots. Parks is responsible for the on-going monitoring of these sites and a formal evaluation after 18 months of operation.

The Board of Park Commissioners (Commissioners) provides a recommendation to the Superintendent regarding whether to make the pilot a permanent OLA based on the Parks evaluation and testimony from the public. The Commissioners may request Parks and Recreation to work jointly with Seattle Animal Control and COLA to mitigate issues that are highlighted in the evaluation. The Superintendent makes the final decision.

Should the Superintendent decide to make the OLA permanent legislation it must be sent to City Council for a vote.

If the Superintendent finds significant problems that cannot be practically corrected, such as impacts to the natural environment, public health or safety, then the Superintendent has the authority to close the site to off-leash use. For example, the OLA at Volunteer Park did not become permanent.

### OLA Description

Kinnear Park is a large neighborhood park and totals 14 acres. The upper part of the park is well-developed with a picnic area, view point, trails, groomed grassy areas and a restroom. The lower part of the park is mostly wooded with a newly-renovated stairwell that cuts through a steep forested ravine down to gravel trails. The 6,044-square-foot OLA is located in the vegetated lower portion of Kinnear Park at the corner of Roy and Elliot next to a tennis court. The blue outline on the map is the OLA surrounded by forested area (light green) and connected by trails (grey).



## Evaluation

Overall, Lower Kinnear OLA meets all the criteria set forth in Resolution 29628 and Ordinance 118724 with the exception of close parking and its location at the foot of a steep slope.

Avoid interference with other established uses and department-sponsored activities.	✓
Avoid directly abutting residences.	✓
Assure the availability of close parking.	X
Locate where there are minimal impacts upon the character of a park.	✓
Locate where there is low potential for spillover into areas not designated or off leash use.	✓
Avoid locating near children's play areas.	✓
Avoid sensitive environmental areas such as wildlife habitats and steep slopes.	X
COLA responsibilities met under umbrella agreement	✓
Animal Shelter responsibilities met under umbrella agreement	✓
No Public Health Issues	✓
No Safety Issues	✓

## Issues/Observations

The OLA is far from residences and mostly surrounded by forested area. The entrances closest to the OLA are located at W Mercer Place and W Roy Street (at the intersection with Elliot). The closest public parking is at W Mercer Place, which requires a quarter mile gravel trail walk to the OLA. The trail is mostly flat until the tennis courts and then drops more steeply towards the OLA for about 100 feet. There is public parking on W Olympic Place along the upper part of Kinnear Park. The visitor that parks on W Olympic Place must descend a 114-step staircase that cuts down a steep ravine, passes the tennis courts and then connects to a gravel trail before entering the OLA.

This design has both benefits and drawbacks on park operations. The benefits are there are very few complaints about the park and the forested surroundings are quiet and beautiful. The drawbacks are the park receives fewer visitors because parking is far from the OLA and those who are not able to walk down stairs or on uneven/steep gravel paths cannot easily access the park. Some OLA visitors have received permission from the commercial property owner to use the private lot next door. This commercial lot is less than 50 feet from the entrance of the OLA.

Lower Kinnear OLA does not have water available for the dogs. Park goers typically bring their own water to keep their dogs hydrated. A water spigot was originally included in the building permit set and would have connected a water source downhill on W Mercer Place to the OLA. However, because the OLA is on a steep slope, a break in the water line would undermine the slope without proper drainage. Therefore, code requires Parks to install a drain line from the spigot to W. Mercer Place. Conventional water service is unattainable at this OLA because the required drain line is too expensive and is invasive to the hillside.

Despite an OLA being at the foot of the park, park visitors often use upper Kinnear as an OLA. Given budget cuts to Animal Control, there is limited data available to see off-leash trends and only two off-leash citations were documented in 2013. Anecdotally, maintenance staff observe neighbors using a section of upper Kinnear as an OLA in the afternoon. Maintenance staff noted that some of the neighbors appear to be older and unlikely able to be able do the stair climb down to the OLA. The maintenance staff observations are consistent with the visit I made at 5 p.m. on a weekday. I parked on W Olympic

Place and passed 13 dogs running off-leash on the grassy hill at the far northeast corner of the park, while their owners conversed sitting on park benches. I walked down the stairs and observed the OLA from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. During this time, one visitor arrived from Belltown to use the OLA. At 6:30 p.m., when I exited the park, there were no more off-leash dogs at upper Kinnear.

The COLA steward has taken good care of the park. Kristin Hocking has logged 113 hours of volunteer support in 2013 and 78 hours in 2014 with the help of 10 volunteers. The kiosk is full of information and the park looks well-maintained and inviting. Since the OLA is on a slight sidehill, a work party is in order soon to rake surfacing away from entrances.

### **Recommendation**

Lower Kinnear OLA is a perfect nature vacation for a dog and an undiscovered gem. It was only recently that the park was renovated and opened up. It will take some time for locals to revisit this park again to see the transformation and enjoy this asset. Additional way-finding, marketing and signage to invite use is necessary to stimulate activity at this isolated location. Parks should assess the potential for closer parking through partnerships with local businesses. Since conventional water service is not an option at this park, Parks should explore alternatives including additional signage at the trailheads that indicate where water is located in the upper portion of the park.